

MODULE 2

HELPING STAFF USE CHILD AND CLASSROOM INFORMATION FOR PLANNING

This module contains two sections:

- Mentor-Coach Forum on Ongoing Child Assessment
- Tutored Video Instruction (TVI).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By completing this module, Mentor-Coaches will:

- Become more aware of age-appropriate early childhood language and literacy outcomes
- Be able to apply mentor-coaching skills in the following ways:
 - ☐ Work with protégés to plan and carry out an ongoing assessment process
 - ☐ Guide protégés in conducting ongoing assessment in authentic settings
 - ☐ Help protégés select appropriate assessment strategies based on questions about children's skill levels and progress
 - ☐ Engage parents or guardians in the ongoing assessment process.

I. MENTOR-COACH FORUM ON ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

CONTEXT

Successful ongoing assessment uses both child performance and staff observation methods to gain a full picture of the child's language abilities and emergent literacy learning. This module helps you build your capacity to guide your protégés in collecting and using child assessment information. You will think about ways to assess and foster the development of phonological awareness in young children.

In this forum we will discuss the self-assessment that you just completed. We will think about the exercise in Module 1 of this unit and will share what you learned from discussions with your protégé.

Unit 4 is the culminating unit of *Steps to Success*. Here you will see reminders in Skills Review boxes. There are pointers for applying mentor-coaching skills (e.g., relationship-building, adult learning, and observation) to your work with protégés.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

INSPIRATIONAL SLOGANS

In this activity you will choose a slogan that best represents the way you approach working with protégés, families, and children. The list of slogans is at the end of this module, just before the STEP-Docs begin.

Use the space below to jot down any new insights about yourself that you gained from this activity.

Notes and Reflections

SELF-ASSESSMENT

In Module 1 you assessed your skills in planning and implementing phonological awareness activities. Think about how you can support protégés in this literacy outcome area.

- 1.** What did you learn about your abilities to plan and implement phonological awareness activities and experiences?

- 2.** Based on this self-assessment, what are some skills you would like to practice? What knowledge do you want to acquire?

- 3.** How will these skills and knowledge influence your work as a Mentor-Coach?

PLANNING FOR ASSESSMENT

In the Module 1 exercise, you talked with your protégé about the program's assessment procedures. You had a conversation about the curriculum and assessment strategies your protégé uses, and ways the staff members use assessment results to plan for instruction. Use these questions to organize what you learned:

Questions about the Planning for Assessment Assignment

- 1.** What did you learn about your protégé's curriculum and ongoing assessment strategies?

- 2.** What is your protégé's understanding of good ongoing assessment practices?

- 3.** What goals would you set to support protégés' use of child assessment to inform instructional practices?

As you participate in the group conversation, use the space below to note important ideas and insights.

Notes and Reflections

INTRODUCTION TO ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT

Ongoing assessment is required for each child to identify his strengths and needs, to help tailor learning experiences and other services, and to support staff in communicating and working with parents and families.

—T. Schultz (2001)

To teach efficiently and effectively, teachers constantly need new information about what children understand and are able to do. Ongoing assessment and teaching go hand in hand. Teaching plans are based on the results of assessment, strategies are implemented, and information is collected to document progress. Ongoing assessment lays the groundwork for further planning and teaching.

Skills Review

Review the pre-observation conference and observation tips from Unit 2, Module 2, for pointers on planning the assessment process.

Notes and Reflections

Assessment should be used as an ongoing process to answer questions about children’s growth and learning, to find ways of supporting their development.

—J. Jablon and A. Dombro (2001)

II. TUTORED VIDEO INSTRUCTION ON ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT

CONTEXT

Ongoing assessment is a process for answering questions about children's growth and learning, and for finding ways to support their development. Effective, accurate assessments help teachers individualize instruction and document children's progress toward identified outcomes.

Head Start programs use many different instruments for collecting information about children in daily activities and routines. Some are formalized and commercially available; others are locally generated tools that rely on observation, rating scales, and interviews to gather information.

This TVI features ways that you can help protégés in assessing each child's skills. It addresses children's interests and the ways they acquire literacy and approach learning.



M-10

USE OF ONGOING ASSESSMENT

Teachers of young children do not get very far in assessments when they ask children to explain themselves. . . . For the present, our best technique seems to be the careful gathering of evidence via the on-the-spot record.

—D. H. Cohen and V. Stern (1983)

Mentor-Coaches can help support protégés as they plan for assessment, collect and analyze information, and design instruction by asking protégés to think about:

1. How they collect child assessment information?
2. Why they collect information?
3. What information they are already collecting?
4. What areas of children's growth they would like to know more about?
5. How they use information once it is collected?
6. What are the most appropriate assessment methods for various purposes?
7. How they are summarizing and understanding assessment results?

Planning for assessment involves having a focus on a child during an activity and knowing why you are collecting information. Once information is available, you and your protégé can analyze it, look for patterns, and decide what the teacher will do differently in the classroom, in instruction, and in interacting with each child.

Authentic Assessment

Authentic Assessment occurs when the setting (the space, activities, materials, routines, and people) is typical, familiar, comfortable, and meaningful to children.

VIDEO CLIP: Observing Children—Infants and Toddlers

This video clip depicts staff members in Early Head Start and Head Start settings collecting data and assessing children throughout the day in various ways, including observations and taking pictures. Scenes show the staff taking notes, collecting work, watching, listening, intervening, and prompting children's learning.



VIDEO CLIP: Observing Children—Preschoolers

Preschool staff in various settings, supported by Jewell, the Mentor-Coach, are collecting information and assessing children's skills in ways that can be used throughout the day.

At the conclusion of the videotape, the TVI presenters make the following points:

- These videos demonstrate a variety of assessment methods: note-taking, reviewing portfolios, watching and listening, taking pictures, and meeting with Mentor-Coaches.
- The Mentor-Coach has a unique role to play in working with staff to observe and assess children, and to discuss assessment results.

USE OF ONGOING ASSESSMENT**Discussion Questions**

1. What experiences do you have in conducting ongoing child assessment?

2. How do you document or record assessment results?

3. What ongoing assessment methods are most effective for you? Least effective?

4. What are ways that you support staff in their assessment of children?

What Mentor-Coaches Can Do:

- Use your skills of reflection, collaborative problem solving, listening, and guiding as you work with protégés.
- Access information about the Head Start program's chosen assessment instruments.
- Help your protégé to understand that effective teaching begins with ongoing assessment.
- Reinforce the importance of authentic assessment in planning instruction.
- Make ongoing assessment of children a regular part of your activity with your protégé.

What Protégés Can Do:

- Gather authentic information about children's skills and capabilities by observing children, taking notes, and collecting work samples.
- Gather information from parent conferences, reports, and interviews.
- Describe the different skills and learning needs of individual children.
- Use the program's established assessment instrument, as well as other methods, to gather ongoing assessment information.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological awareness is the ability to focus on the sounds of spoken language rather than the meaning of words.

—H.K. Yopp and R.H. Yopp
(as cited in *The Head Start Leaders Guide to Positive Child Outcomes*, 2003)

Language provides the foundation for the development of literacy skills and phonological awareness in particular. Speaking, reading aloud, and singing all support a child's understanding and use of language.

Making auditory distinctions is the basis of phonological awareness. By listening to others and by speaking, children develop phonological awareness. They learn that every spoken word is a sequence of sounds. An example of phonological awareness is recognizing that *bug*, *bear*, and *button* all start with the same /b/ sound.

Phonological awareness is key to making sense of the alphabet. Without phonological awareness, instruction in phonics and decoding does not make sense, because children cannot discriminate the sounds of letters, words, and parts of words.

Research has shown that phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge predict whether a child will learn to read during the first two years of school (Parlakian, 2004).

Supporting Phonological Awareness

Ongoing assessment of children's phonological awareness activities can lead staff to more purposeful teaching and more careful tracking of children's progress over time.

Key elements of the continuum of phonological awareness are in **STEP-Doc 4.2a: Phonological Awareness**.



VIDEO CLIP: Supporting Phonological Awareness

In this next clip you will see a Mentor-Coach demonstrate clapping and musical rhyming to support phonological awareness while her protégé observes.

DISCUSSION ON PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS**Discussion Questions**

1. How are the phonemic awareness activities in the video clip similar to or different from those you have observed?

2. How might you help your protégé effectively integrate more age-appropriate phonological awareness into daily activities and routines?

3. Is there anything related to phonological awareness that you need to know more about in order to effectively support your protégé?

Think about the children in your protégé's class:

1. What do you already know about the children's phonological awareness skills?

2. What questions do you have about children's development?

3. What child assessment information could you gather to answer these questions?

4. When, where, and how can you collect this information?

You can use open ended “*wh*” questions to help protégés reflect on current practices and to better assess children's phonological skills.

Skills Review

Helpful reflective conferencing pointers from Unit 3, Module 2, include letting the protégé comment first, using open-ended questions and comments to draw out the protégé, and challenging the protégé's thinking.

Look at **STEP-Doc 1.2b** for questions that promote reflection.

What Mentor-Coaches Can Do:

- Help your protégé understand the concept of phonological awareness and what it looks like in the classroom.
- Be familiar with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework related to phonological awareness.
- Guide your protégé's planning to provide experiences that focus children's attention on hearing the sounds in words and speech.
- Guide your protégé in developing materials and activities that support the teaching of phonological awareness skills.
- With your protégé identify a variety of rhyming games, poems, books, and nursery rhymes that support phonological awareness.

What Protégés Can Do:

- Understand and use the sequence of phonological skills presented in *The Head Start Leaders Guide to Positive Child Outcomes*. (2003, p.46).
- Incorporate sound and language play into daily routines such as diapering, dressing, feeding, eating and play.
- Emphasize rhyming patterns during stories, poetry, chanting, singing, and finger-plays.
- Use stories, music, and singing to focus on the sounds of words and the rhythm of language.

USING QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ONGOING ASSESSMENT

Young children do not simply tell you what they know. You can talk to parents and other staff. You also have to look carefully at their activities and behaviors in a number of different settings over time.

All children, especially infants and toddlers must have their physical needs met, feel emotionally safe, be comfortable with the adults around them, and be in a familiar environment before you can accurately observe or assess the extent of their skills and knowledge. Young children's behavior is dependent on context; therefore, Mentor-Coaches must consider family circumstances and culture in considering what each child is able to do.

Effective, accurate child assessment starts with a question or set of questions about a child's growth and development. Posing questions can help you learn about a child's interests, skills and abilities, approach to learning, use of language, and social interactions.

Developing specific questions that you seek to answer about a child gives a focus for observations. Because these questions and accurate answers provide rich information on individual children and classroom practices, it is a process that is well suited to discussion and exploration between Mentor-Coaches and protégés.

Answering questions about what a child knows, or is able to do, is dependent on careful observation and information from multiple sources.

VIDEO CLIP: Protégé's Assessment of a Child

In this video we see a protégé share her observations of a child with her Mentor-Coach. The pair then uses the information to create assessment questions and to plan classroom activities for communication skill assessment.

**DISCUSSION ON USING QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ONGOING
ASSESSMENT****Discussion Questions**

1. How have you used observation and other assessment strategies to answer questions about a child?

2. What kinds of support in using questions to guide ongoing assessment were helpful for protégés?

EXERCISE 1: VIGNETTES, PART 2

Both Cheryl and Liana, the protégés in the vignettes, are trying to improve their practices to support phonological awareness and related language and literacy skills. Read about the strategies they develop. Look for the assessment methods that they use to answer their questions.

VIGNETTE, Part 2 (Infant-Toddler)

As with most infant and toddler assessments, Cheryl and Cindy look first at adult care practices and the context in which the child spends his or her time. They know that very young children must have a safe and responsive relationship with a known caregiver if they are to thrive developmentally. Often a very young child's strengths will only be apparent when the conditions are right: the child is feeling comfortable, has had his or her needs met, and is in the presence of responsive and trusted adults.

Together, Cindy and Cheryl develop a list of questions they want to answer.

- What are the barriers that keep Cheryl from spending more time talking and reading to Francis? At what time of day is Francis most animated and vocalizing? What is going on around him when he is vocalizing? What kind of vocalizing does he do at home?
- What else do we know about Francis that might affect his language development?

The challenge for Cindy and Cheryl is to develop assessment methods to answer their questions about Francis. Cindy, the Mentor-Coach, agrees to observe in the infant room several times to help Cheryl assess the quality and quantity of her interactions with Francis. Cindy will:

- Record the number of interactions Cheryl has with Francis and how long they last
- Describe what Cheryl and Francis are doing together and as much of the conversation with Francis that she can
- Note interruptions, distractions, and missed opportunities.

Cheryl will observe Francis to see when he is most animated and vocalizing and will note those vocalizations. Several times she will leave a small tape recorder near where Francis is playing to see if she can capture vocalizations that she may be missing. Cindy suggests that Cheryl review Francis' folder for any sensory or physical concerns and for other developmental information. Cheryl invites Francis' mom to talk about his vocalizations at home.

VIGNETTE, Part 2 (Preschool)

Liana and Lee decide to assess rhyming responses for the first five minutes of circle time. Liana will read nursery rhymes and picture books with rhymes that are familiar to the children. The assessment will take place after she has read a book a few times, so that the children are familiar with the rhymes.

Liana’s presentation will follow a predictable sequence using less- to-more prompting.

- 1. When Liana hesitates at the second of a pair of rhyming words and looks expectantly at the child, does the child say the word?
- 2. When Liana hints “Remember it sounds like _____” (the first word of the rhyming pair), does the child say the rhyme?
- 3. If the child does not complete the rhyme independently, Liana prompts with the beginning sound. Does the child say the word?
- 4. If she gives the child the rhyming word, does the child repeat it?
- 5. Does the child sit without responding regardless of prompting?

Liana chooses two children, Mark and Isomary. To gather information, Liana and Lee create a short form (shown on next page). Liana will write the number of the sequence’s skill level (1 to 5) each time Mark or Isomary has a turn. This form will help keep track of where each child is in the sequence, and any progress they make in being able to respond with fewer prompts. Liana can also see the number of times it takes until each child reaches the highest level (Level 1).

Date: _____

Level of rhyming response: Write 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 for each response(with “1” the highest).

Child										
Mark										
Isomary										

Questions for Reflection

1. How do the strategies Cheryl or Liana use to support phonological awareness skills incorporate effective practices? What resources could you recommend that would guide them in using effective practices?

2. Do you think the strategies Cheryl or Liana have developed to answer their questions will provide them with the information they need to inform instruction? Why or why not?

3. Where are the opportunities for coaching Cheryl or Liana on planning and using child assessment data?

4. As you think about your own role as a Mentor-Coach, how might you improve your protégé's effectiveness in using assessment to enhance phonological awareness skills?

ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

There is always something new to learn about a child—even children you think you know well. If you make a habit of asking questions, you will get to know who a child is and can keep track of who that child is becoming.

To assess four-year-old Kathy, the teacher photographed Kathy and Josie playing together in the block area. Several days later, he made some notes about the conversation Kathy was having with another preschooler. On yet a third occasion, he saved a painting Kathy made with Josie. When it is time to evaluate Kathy's performance and progress, her teacher's judgments about her current ability to interact with her peers will be based on these and other observations.

—J. Jablon and A. Dombro (2001)

The Assessment Framework presents a series of questions for focusing protégés' attention on children's performance and for changing instruction to meet children's learning needs. The full set of seven questions for the **Assessment Framework** is in **STEP-Doc 4.2b**.

Some protégés may not be accustomed to using a framework. Mentor-Coaches will need to be particularly sensitive to help protégés see the value of this and other frameworks. Use your own relevant experience to talk about why it is an important framework and how it can benefit protégés in their work with children. Using reflective conferencing and being sensitive to the protégé's stage in the change process will be important for deciding when and how much new information to share with the protégé at any time.

DISCUSSION ON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Discussion Questions

1. How would you introduce the framework?

2. How could you relate the framework to something that is already familiar to protégés?

3. What mentor-coaching skills could be most helpful?

Skills Review

Remember the Five Stages of Change Process:

- Not ready to change
- Thinking about change
- Getting ready to change
- Changing
- Maintaining change

You can find more information on the stages of change in Unit 1, Module 3.

EXERCISE 2: CREATING AN ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Read the following vignette about Aurora (the Mentor-Coach) and Stella (the protégé). Think about whether Stella's answers to the assessment questions give her the information needed to plan Alex's instruction. What could be added?

VIGNETTE—Stella and Aurora

Alex, almost three, participates in a teacher-led group activity by making animal sounds with plastic toy animals. However, when he listens to a tape of animal sounds, he cannot point to the toy animal that corresponds to the sound he hears. His teacher, Stella, is concerned that he is not able to manipulate sounds and to make connections between his own sounds and those that he hears.

In a conference with Aurora, her Mentor-Coach, she shares her concern. Aurora confirms Stella's knowledge that phonological awareness begins with listening attentively and organizing sounds into simple categories. Their problem solving begins with looking at some of the anecdotal data collected on Alex over the past few months. Aurora points out that in the beginning of the year, Alex was quiet and was not interested in the plastic animals at all, and certainly not animals in tapes or stories. Aurora and Stella recognized that they could see progress in Alex's skills. Alex's progress reassured Stella that sounds did have meaning for him, because:

- His vocabulary is increasing and he is talking more
- He sits for 2–4 minutes for stories
- He is learning animal names and their associated sounds.

Stella asks Aurora how to help Alex to make the connections between the animal sounds he makes and the sounds he hears. Aurora answers, "Would you like me to demonstrate some ways to do that?" Stella agrees with enthusiasm.

Aurora asks Alex if he would like to sit with her for a while and use the headphones. She invites two peers to join them. She brings the plastic animals with her. Alex makes all the sounds for the plastic toys, but he still does not connect the toys with the sounds from the tape. When the peers point to the animal for each sound on the tape, Alex watches them and sometimes copies them.

Afterward, Stella and Aurora agree that setting up situations with other children is a helpful way for Alex to learn. They recognize that the activity engaged him, and he was copying other children. Stella decides to do this more frequently for Alex.

In addition to including peers to help him with listening, Stella decides to:

- Use the listening center as Aurora did
- Stop the tape after each animal sound, giving Alex time to point to the appropriate animal and make the sound.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are some other ideas that you would try with Alex?

2. Describe how you have assessed children and used the information to plan activities.

3. How would you initiate a mentor-coaching conversation with your protégé to improve curriculum planning and individualizing?

4. How might you resist the urge to immediately tell your protégé what to do rather than support reflection on what he or she is already doing?

What Mentor-Coaches Can Do:

- Reinforce the use of the Assessment Framework with protégés.
- Work with your protégé to:
 - ☐ Assess children's progress toward early literacy outcomes
 - ☐ Develop goals, questions, and ongoing assessment strategies to gather information about individual children
 - ☐ Determine how, where, and when outcomes will be assessed.

What Protégés Can Do:

- Describe expectations for children's progress
- Develop questions and plans for ongoing assessment for developmental milestones in language and literacy for infants and toddlers, or specific Head Start Child Outcomes for preschoolers.

OPTIONS FOR COLLECTING ONGOING ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Two Approaches to Collecting Data

There are many ways to collect and record ongoing assessment information. You may be familiar with running records, anecdotal records, journal entries, checklists, sampling observations, and rating scales.

Although ongoing assessment methods vary, there are two basic approaches to collecting ongoing assessment information.

For each of the two approaches, Mentor-Coaches can help protégés appreciate the importance of assessing children during their everyday activities, including play and during common routines such as diapering, feeding, center time, circle time, and snack time.

STEP-Doc 4.2c: Two Approaches to Collecting Data gives you more-detailed descriptions of each of the two approaches.

1. Naturalistic Assessment—Using the Child’s Activities

Naturalistic assessment generally focuses on the child and his or her usual interests and activities. Naturalistic assessment occurs with a child-centered focus.

Naturalistic assessment and observation methods are often invisible to the child. The child continues in the usual activities with no awareness that an adult is observing and assessing. This is an effective approach in assessing infants, toddlers, and preschool age children.

2. Focused Assessment—Planning the Child’s Activities

Focused assessment does not wait for spontaneous behaviors to arise so that a child’s progress or level of ability in a particular area can be observed. The adult selects materials and guides interactions to directly draw out the skills targeted for observation and assessment. Observations occur in play-based and other types of authentic situations.

The Mentor-Coach and protégé decide on the environment, toys, and strategies to use. Assessments occur in play-based and other types of authentic situations.

The two approaches to assessment are particularly useful for assessing infants and toddlers. While the youngest children may not be able to “tell” a teacher or observer what they know, they do have a variety of nonverbal cues that can “show” their individual developmental strengths, interests, and challenges.

The younger the child, the more challenging the assessment process can be, for a variety of reasons. For example, a child’s attention span and response to adults is strongly influenced by how he or she feels (tired, hungry, sleepy, etc.).



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VIDEO CLIP: Naturalistic Assessment

With her Mentor-Coach, a protégé discusses a child's play activity that she observed. She has carefully documented a toddler reading to a doll in her classroom. After looking at the documentation, the Mentor-Coach and protégé (both named Elizabeth) talk about one way to support further play that will help the child develop literacy skills and an appreciation of language and sounds.

DISCUSSION ON NATURALISTIC ASSESSMENT**Discussion Questions**

1. What skills did the protégé observe the child demonstrating?

2. How did the protégé and the Mentor-Coach use the assessment information?

3. What other classroom materials or activities can you suggest for protégés to use in a naturalistic assessment?

What Mentor-Coaches Can Do:

Guide and stretch protégés' thinking with questions that challenge their knowledge and beliefs about curriculum, ongoing assessment, and children's learning.

What Protégés Can Do:

- Ask questions about their children's skills
- Develop a plan for each child to meet program's curriculum goals and objectives, and the Head Start Child Outcomes
- Develop strategies for assessing children's progress and competence in phonological awareness or another language or literacy skill
- Use various methods (e.g., portfolios, children's self-reflection, anecdotal notes, a child-focused observational approach, etc.) for the ongoing assessment of children

ORGANIZING ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

For information to be useful to you, you and your protégé need a way to organize and categorize it. Different organizational methods include:

- An expanding or accordion file for a year's worth of data
- Photo albums with photos dated and arranged in sequence
- An accessible computer and digital photographs or videos stored on CDs
- Plastic bags that can be zipped for audiotapes, artwork, writing samples, photos, and other items
- Coded folders or envelopes for different curriculum areas or for different children.

Children can help organize information by:

- Using a date stamp on their own work
- Deciding what items to place in their portfolios.

Protégés can keep a checklist in each child's collection. By checking off items, they can tell at a glance which skills have been assessed and where there are gaps.

As the Mentor-Coach, you can guide protégés in all areas of portfolio use. The more organized and up-to-date the portfolio collection, the more valuable it is. Since information in the portfolio is dated, arranging the work samples, interviews, checklists, inventories, and other information is simple. In addition you can help protégés to further organize the material according to curriculum area or category of development (cognitive, gross motor, fine motor).

The best use of portfolios is to document each child's progress over time. Together Mentor-Coaches and protégé's can draw conclusions about a child's progress, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and challenges, based on the following:

- The full range of that child's development, as documented by the portfolio
- The protégé's knowledge of the curriculum, skill in ongoing assessment, and stages of children's development in various domains.

My protégé had never before taken charge of collecting data to include in her children's portfolios. I was amazed at how much she enjoyed the process. It helped a lot that we reflected on our own biases beforehand. Though it wasn't easy to do, it made us both appreciate that we had collected objective and accurate data to inform our next moves.

—Head Start Mentor



VIDEO CLIP: Organizational Strategies

Cheryl and Judith share ways to organize and use portfolios to guide curriculum implementation and selection of instructional strategies. They remember that they will be sharing information with parents. Their portfolios are an important record and document of children's progress. They discuss using audiocassettes to document the progress of oral language progress and videotapes to record children's interactions and activities.

Use the following questions to think about ways to support your protégé in organizing assessment data and in using it.

DISCUSSION ON ORGANIZING ASSESSMENT INFORMATION**Discussion Questions**

1. What are some of your own experiences with organizing ongoing assessment data? What have you learned from your experiences that you can pass on to your protégé?

2. How can you help your protégé use portfolio materials to better understand progress for individual children and for the group?

3. How can you support your protégé in using portfolios to plan family conferences?

ENGAGING PARENTS IN THE ONGOING ASSESSMENT PROCESS

It gives me a lot of satisfaction to review Alyssa's progress with her parents. They are very proud of their daughter and her early literacy skills. We have looked at her assessment data together every step of the way. And we have had a real partnership, because they have supported her literacy development at home, too. It has been a win-win for all of us—especially Alyssa.

—Protégé

Just as Mentor-Coaches and protégés take time to build trust and a strong working relationship, protégés and parents or guardians can build trusting relationships to support children's development.

- Parents or guardians need information on how language and literacy develop and how they can help at home.
- When parents have access to information and activities, they become partners in their children's language development and literacy learning.

Participation in assessment draws the Head Start staff, parents, and other adults together around children's progress.

VIDEO CLIP: Conversation with Parents

The teacher, Linda, meets with the parents of Alyssa, a five-year-old who is transitioning from a tribal Head Start program into kindergarten. She uses the child's portfolio to demonstrate the child's progress and invites the parents to share their observations. Linda suggests strategies the parents can use at home to extend the child's learning.

**DISCUSSION ON ENGAGING PARENTS IN ONGOING
ASSESSMENT****Discussion Questions**

1. How do you feel about involving parents or guardians in the ongoing assessment process?

2. What have you learned about involving families that you can pass on to your protégé?

What Mentor-Coaches Can Do

- Help protégés reflect on identifying ways to help families better understand children's language and literacy skills.
- Work together to develop questions that encourage joint problem-solving and information-sharing between protégés and the adults in a child's family.

What Protégés Can Do

- Engage guardians and parents in conversations to better understand their expectations for their children's development.
- Gather information from the family about the child's language and literacy skills, interests, and preferences.
- Share progress reports with parents or guardians to support the development of children's language, literacy and other skills at home.

We know that any assessment in our program must involve parents and strengthen their understanding and appreciation of their children's unique characteristics and progress over time.

—L. S. Bratton (2001)

ONGOING ASSESSMENT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND TEACHING

By assessing children's learning through ongoing observation, you gain insights into children's strengths, knowledge, interests and skills. . . . You reflect on daily life in your program and make adaptations that enable children to overcome obstacles and build on what they know and do well. By using what you learn from observations, you can foster each child's competence and success and create and maintain a high-quality program for children and families.

—J. Jablon & A. Dombro (2001)

As a Mentor-Coach, you guide protégés to understand that:

- Assessment for curricular and instructional planning is the means by which they make reliable decisions about appropriate experiences and activities for each child's learning and for groups of children.
- Assessment is a critical means to an end, not an end in itself. It leads to other actions including effective instruction, which must follow from it.

Effective teaching requires staff to identify and design instruction appropriate to each child's stage of development, learning style, cultural strengths, and needs. Staff must:

- Show respect for the diverse talents, interests and other variations of each learner
- Commit to helping each child develop self-confidence and competence
- Acknowledge that ongoing assessment, curriculum implementation and teaching are inextricably linked
- Use assessment to inform curriculum planning and instruction, and to monitor children's learning.

Once you collect information, you need to interpret it. Follow these three steps to move from information to instructional planning:

Step 1: Look at the assessment information as a whole. Does it come from a variety of sources over a period of time?

Step 2: Reflect on the results and look for patterns:

- Where does the child assessment information fall on a developmental continuum?
- How does it compare with the teacher's and parent's understanding and expectations?
- How does each child's preferences, skills, and abilities vary across different areas of curriculum?

Step 3: Make instructional decisions for the group and children within the group based on multiple sources of information and thoughtful reflection.

VIDEO CLIP: Toddler Assessment

Jennifer and Rachel, teachers in the classroom, use assessment techniques to build children's language and literacy skills. Jennifer talks about the actions as children perform them. Rachel follows a child's lead and provides words in combination with his actions in both the block stacking and drum activities.

The TVI presenters comment on the video, particularly on the importance of following the children's interests and of using children's experiences to assess and plan instruction.

VIDEO CLIP: Preschool Assessment

In this video clip, the Mentor-Coach, Carol, works with her protégé, Shannon. They use the COR assessment to help identify language and literacy areas that can be strengthened in the classroom. Together, they plan nursery rhyme activities that can help the children understand positional words (e.g., below, over, next to).

DISCUSSION ON USING ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Discussion Questions

1. How are the videos' examples of using assessment information similar to the ways you have seen protégés use information? How do they differ?

2. In what areas do protégés need the most support?

3. What have you learned in this module about how Mentor-Coaches and protégés can work together to use assessment to inform instruction?

4. How will you apply these lessons to your work with protégés in the future?

We realized that if we were going to be able to provide the highest quality program for all our children, we would need to develop a strong system for ensuring quality from classroom to classroom. That system would have to link child assessment and goal setting to curriculum.”

— Mary Carr-Wilt (as quoted in David and Jones-Baker, 2001)



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Think back on the information in this module:

- Planning and carrying out ongoing child assessment
- Conducting authentic assessment
- Engaging parents in ongoing assessment
- Collecting assessment information
- Ongoing assessment for curriculum implementation, instructional planning and teaching
- Supporting phonological awareness and other early literacy skills
- Using questions to guide assessment
- Using the Assessment Framework
- Strategies for organizing assessment information

Take a few moments to reflect on these four questions:

- 1.** How does what you learned about ongoing child assessment compare to your current practices and roles (for some, including the role of Mentor-Coach)?

- 2.** What mentor-coaching skills are you already using to support positive practices in ongoing child assessment?

- 3.** What would you like to change or add to what you already do?

4. What are one or two of your biggest challenges?

Based on your reflections, focus on your Mentor-Coach Professional Development Plan. Identify what mentor-coaching skills you need to help support ongoing child assessment with your protégés. Include skills that you already have but would like to strengthen, what you will need and how you will know that you are successful.



WRAP-UP

Congratulations! You have just completed a series of facilitator-led activities for building your capacity to guide protégés in collecting and using child assessment information. You will now move on to the last two modules of your *Steps to Success* Mentor-Coach Manual.

INSPIRATIONAL SLOGANS

- Set new goals, start new projects, and accept help from wherever you can get it.
- Have the courage to do the opposite of what everybody else is doing, when you think it's the right thing to do.
- Play for the long haul, not just for the short payoff.
- If there is no wind, row.
- Just go out there and do what you've got to do!
- Persistence, Persistence, Persistence!
- Set goals with a passion and desire to achieve them.
- Keep the space around you clean and bright!
- Accept responsibility for writing your own life's scenario!
- The more we do, the more we can do.
- Opportunity, sooner or later, comes to all who work and wish.
- Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.
- Generate a feeling of excitement about your life and where you are going.
- Let your hook be always cast; in the pool where you least expect to find it, there will be a fish.
- Nothing is stronger than habit.
- Every day you must decide what you could do, what you should do, and what you must do.
- The absence of alternatives demands creativity.
- No matter what you do, turn in an outstanding performance.

- Love the challenge of engineering a task from beginning to end.
- Always look for the right idea. It's there; you just have to find it.
- The strongest principles of growth lie in human choice.
- When you treat others with self-esteem, their esteem grows stronger.
- Be innovative. It's amazing what could happen if you constantly think about how to do things more effectively.
- You miss 100% of the shots you never take.
- It's never too late to be what you might have been.
- Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose.
- The secret of success is directed effort.
- Winners are people who continually make small corrections in their performances until they get exactly what they want.
- Reach for objectives that will be good for you as well as for those around you.
- Think big. At the same time, be able to be aware of the smallest details.
- Creative people figure out what must be done. Then they do it.
- Delegate! It can save your life, or—at the very least—your SANITY.
- The best preparation for good work tomorrow is to do good work today.

STEP Doc 4.2a: Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness proceeds through a logical sequence:

- **Listening involves paying attention to words:** Here are some examples:
 - ☐ Talk to infants and toddlers during everyday routines (diapering, feeding, dressing).
 - ☐ Respond to infant's babbling and cooing, imitating the sounds a child makes and extending a child's initial sounds with the full word.
 - ☐ Provide on-going narration of what you see children doing as they play, so that they can begin to associate language with action and specific words with objects.
 - ☐ Read books that focus on initial sounds
 - ☐ Use finger-play games for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
 - ☐ For preschool-aged children use listening games that focus children's attention on words.
- **Rhyming involves organizing sounds by endings:** Use rhyming to help infants, toddlers, and preschoolers focus on the sounds at the end of words.
- **Alliteration involves beginning sounds:** Use games to help children focus on the sounds at the beginning of words. Use activities to compare and contrast sounds at the beginning and end of words, reinforcing what has been learned with rhyming and alliteration.
- **Sentence segmenting means understanding the concept that words are individual units:** Use music and clapping to help children experience sentence segmenting by providing a beat at the beginning of each word. Count the number of words in sentences, using manipulatives that are moved for each word. Or sing songs that segment words with rhythm.

- **Syllable segmenting highlights the sounds within words:** Count and clap the syllables in words.
- **Onset rime*** involves hearing the individual sounds in words: Divide one-syllable words by their initial consonant sound and all their other sounds; delete and substitute the sounds in the words.
- **Phoneme segmenting, blending, and manipulation:*** Blend together individual sounds; break down words into individual phonemes (phoneme segmentations); replace individual sounds in a word. For example, take *mit*, change the /i/ to /a/ and you have *mat* (phoneme manipulation).

*Onset rimes and phoneme segmentation, blending, and manipulation are generally recognized as kindergarten skills.

From: *The Head Start Leaders Guide to Positive Child Outcomes*. pp.46–47.

**STEP-Doc 4.2b:
Assessment Framework****ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK¹**

1. What are the language and literacy skills and the related outcomes that you want children to achieve?
2. What do you expect to see children do if they are successfully reaching age-appropriate language and literacy outcomes?
3. What do children know now? What skills can they already demonstrate?
4. What questions do you have about children in relation to these outcomes?
5. How, when, and where can you answer these questions about children?
6. What does the information you have gathered tell you about what skills children still need in order to reach the outcomes?
7. How can you use this information for more effective instruction?

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STEP-Doc 4.2c: Two Approaches to Collecting Data

There are many ways for you to record ongoing assessment information as you collect it with your protégés. You may be familiar with many of them. You explored the types of assessment and recording methods that your protégés use in the exercise at the end of Module 1. There are running records, anecdotal records, journal entries, checklists, sampling observations, and rating scales.

Although there is wide variation in these methods, and although many Head Start programs have or are creating their own assessment measures, there are two basic approaches for interacting with children to complete ongoing assessment.

For each of the two approaches presented, you can help protégés appreciate the importance of assessing children during their everyday activities (such as play) and during their common routines (such as diapering, feeding, center time, circle time, and snack time). In other words, children are assessed in authentic settings.

Naturalistic Assessment—Using the Child’s Activities

1. Naturalistic assessment occurs with a child-centered focus. The interaction between the adult and the child follows the child’s lead or capitalizes on the child’s interests.

- The child may initiate the interaction, or the adult may focus on the object of the child’s attention and then intentionally initiate the interaction with questions or comments. For example:

“I notice that you started with red and yellow, and now you have orange. Why do you think that happened?”

“You put some of the /p/ pictures together and the /s/ pictures together. Where does the picture of the sun go?”

“It looks like you are being the mommy. What will the mommy do when the baby cries?”

- As another approach, an adult may observe the child during play and may intentionally join in the activity while being careful to follow the child's lead. For example:

The adult may start to paint beside the child, using red and yellow, mixing the two, and say, "I had red and yellow, and now I have orange. I wonder what happened?"

The adult may start sorting pictures beside the child and talk out loud, saying, "Let's see, sun . . . does that go with the /p/ pictures or the /s/ pictures?" and then wait for a response from the child.

The teacher plays beside a child cradling a doll. She picks up a doll and cradles it too. She then says, "Oh dear, my baby is crying. I wonder what is making my baby cry?"

2. Naturalistic assessment and observational methods are often invisible to the child. The child continues in the usual activities with no awareness that an adult is observing and assessing. This is an effective approach in assessing infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.

Focused Assessment—Planning The Child's Activities

Focused assessment does not wait for spontaneous behaviors to arise so that a child's progress or level of ability in a particular area can be observed.

1. The adult selects materials and guides interactions to directly elicit the skills targeted for observation and assessment.
2. The Mentor-Coach and protégé decide on the environment, toys, and strategies to use for eliciting behaviors. Observations occur in play-based and other types of authentic situations.